

## Message Text

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S/S: MR. MILLER

S/S-O: W. NEWLIN

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SECRET STATE 042091

EXDIS / TOSEC 269, NOFORN

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR

SUBJECT: MESSMER MAY BE IN GROOMING FOR FRENCH PRESIDENCY

1. FOLLOWING IS INR ANALYSIS OF FRENCH CABINET RESHUFFLE:

2. THE RETURN OF MESSMER AS FRENCH PRIME MINISTER AFTER PRESIDENT POMPIDOU'S SELF-GENERATED AND SHORT-LIVED CABINET CRISIS UNDERSCORES POMPIDOU'S FAITH IN HIS PRINCIPAL LIEUTENANT. WHILE AIM OF THE RESIGNATION DRAMA WAS TO REFURBISH MESSMER'S TARNISHED AUTHORITY IN THE FACE OF POOR PROSPECTS FOR THE ECONOMY AND OF OTHER CRITICAL DOMESTIC ISSUES, THE EPISODE MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN INTENDED TO PROMOTE MESSMER AS A POSSIBLE COMPROMISE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. SUCH AN EVOLUTION WOULD BE PREDICATED BOTH ON WORSENING OF POMPIDOU'S HEALTH TO FORCE A NEW ELECTION BEFORE HIS CURRENT TERM ENDS IN 1976, AND ON MESSMER'S SUCCESS IN GAINING SUBSTANTIAL PUBLIC BACKING.

3. MESSMER'S NEW CABINET, WHOSE RESHUFFLE HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN UNDER CONSIDERATION FOR MANY WEEKS, CONTAINS MOST SECRET

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OF THE LEADING PERSONALITIES OF OLD TEAM, NOTABLY

FINANCE MINISTER GISCARD D'ESTAING AND FOREIGN MINISTER JOBERT. FORMER INTERIOR MINISTER MARCELLIN AND FORMER AGRICULTURE MINISTER CHIRAC SWAPPED POSTS. SEVEN MINISTRIES WERE DROPPED ALTOGETHER.

4. LOGIC OF MESSMER'S CANDIDACY FOR PRESIDENCY RESTS ON FACT THAT HE WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE COMPROMISE IN VIEW OF POMPIDOU'S DISLIKE OF CHABAN-DELMAS AND OF THE GAULLIST "BARONS" STRONG OPPOSITION TO GISCARD. GOOD EMBASSY PARIS SOURCE REPORTS THAT POMPIDOU REPORTEDLY TOLD JOBERT RECENTLY THAT HE WOULD NEVER APPOINT EITHER CHABAN OR GISCARD TO PREMIERSHIP OR DESIGNATE EITHER MAN AS HIS SUCCESSOR, SINCE HE HAD ALREADY DECIDED ON MESSMER. MESSMER, WHOSE GAULLIST CREDENTIALS ARE IMPECCABLE, WOULD HAVE APPEAL TO THE BASICALLY CONSERVATIVE FRENCH ELECTORATE. CASEY

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